



November 4, 2002

Mr. Steve Smith
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

OR2002-6274

Dear Mr. Smith:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 171604.

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received a request for the proposals offering to provide depository banking and related financial services to the city and the contract for depository services between Frost Bank and the city. You state that the city has released a redacted copy of the requested contract. You claim that portions of the requested contract are excepted under section 552.136 of the Government Code and that the city wishes to withhold specimen signatures in the requested contract for security reasons. Furthermore, you state, and provide documentation showing, that you have notified Bank of America, N.A. ("Bank of America"), Bank One, N.A. ("Bank One"), and Wells Fargo Bank Texas, N.A. ("Wells Fargo"), third parties whose proprietary interests may be implicated by the request, of the request for information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305 (permitting interested third party to submit to attorney general reasons why requested information should not be released); Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (determining that statutory predecessor to Gov't Code § 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in Public Information Act in certain circumstances). We have considered your arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

You argue that the account numbers in the requested contract must be withheld under section 552.136 of the Government Code. Section 552.136 makes certain access device numbers confidential and provides in pertinent part:

- (a) In this section, "access device" means a card, plate, code, account number, personal identification number, electronic serial number, mobile identification number, or other telecommunications service, equipment, or instrument identifier or means of account access that alone or in conjunction with another access device may be used to:

- (1) obtain money, goods, services, or another thing of value;
- (2) initiate a transfer of funds other than a transfer originated solely by paper instrument.

(b) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.

Gov't Code § 552.136. Accordingly, the city must withhold the account numbers that we have marked pursuant to section 552.136 of the Government Code.

You also argue that the specimen signatures in the requested contract should be withheld. As you do not raise any specific exception with respect to this information, we are unable to conclude that such information may be withheld under a discretionary exception against disclosure. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally). Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." However, you have not directed our attention to any law, nor are we aware of any law, under which the information in question is considered to be confidential for purposes of section 552.101. *See, e.g.*, Open Records Decision Nos. 600 at 4 (1992) (constitutional privacy), 478 at 2 (1987) (statutory confidentiality), 611 at 1 (1992) (common-law privacy). Therefore, the city may not withhold the specimen signatures in the requested contract from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.

We turn now to the submitted proposals. An interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should be withheld from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, Bank of America, Bank One, and Wells Fargo have not submitted to this office their reasons explaining why their information should not be released. Therefore, Bank of America, Bank One, and Wells Fargo have provided us with no basis to conclude that they have a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.110(b) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual or evidentiary material, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that it actually faces competition and that substantial competitive injury would likely result from disclosure); Open Records Decision Nos. 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3 (1990).

We note, however, that the submitted proposals contain e-mail addresses obtained from the public. Section 552.137 makes certain e-mail addresses confidential. Section 552.137 provides:

(a) An e-mail address of a member of the public that is provided for the purpose of communicating electronically with a governmental body is confidential and not subject to disclosure under this chapter.

(b) Confidential information described by this section that relates to a member of the public may be disclosed if the member of the public affirmatively consents to its release.

Gov't Code §552.137. You do not inform us that a member of the public has affirmatively consented to the release of any e-mail address contained in the submitted materials. The city must, therefore, withhold e-mail addresses of members of the public under section 552.137. We have marked the types of e-mail addresses that must be withheld under section 552.137. We note that section 552.137 does not apply to a business' general e-mail address or to a government employee's work e-mail address.

Finally, we note that some of the submitted materials are copyrighted. A custodian of public records must comply with the copyright law and is not required to furnish copies of records that are copyrighted. Attorney General Opinion JM-672 (1987). A governmental body must allow inspection of copyrighted materials unless an exception applies to the information. *Id.* If a member of the public wishes to make copies of copyrighted materials, the person must do so unassisted by the governmental body. In making copies, the member of the public assumes the duty of compliance with the copyright law and the risk of a copyright infringement suit. *See* Open Records Decision No. 550 (1990).

To summarize, (1) the city must withhold the account numbers that we have marked pursuant to section 552.136; (2) the city must withhold the types of e-mail addresses we have marked in the submitted proposals under section 552.137; (3) the remaining requested information must be released; and (4) while the city must allow inspection of copyrighted information not otherwise excepted from disclosure, the city need not furnish copies of such information to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the

governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at 877/673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.--Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Texas Building and Procurement Commission at 512/475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. We note that a third party may challenge this ruling by filing suit seeking to withhold information from a requestor. Gov't Code § 552.325. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Karen A. Eckerle
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KAE/sdk

Ref: ID# 171604

Enc: Submitted documents

c: Mr. Roddy Stinton
San Antonio Express-News
P.O. Box 2171
San Antonio, Texas 78297
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Lisa Hill
Vice President
Bank of America, N.A.
P.O. Box 300
San Antonio, Texas 78291-0300
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Lee Laitao, C.C.M.
Vice President, Sales
Bank One, N.A.
TX3-8046
P.O. Box 900
San Antonio, Texas 78293
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Stan Tolson
Relationship Manager
Wells Fargo Bank Texas, N.A.
MAC 5698-011
40 N.E. Loop 410, Suite 301
San Antonio, Texas 78216
(w/o enclosures)